

mind" on the subject of our fighting material. One wishes that he had not left the women folk out of it; quite as many "flannelled fools" and "muddled oafs" might be found amongst them. "Girls who play golf all the morning, hockey all the afternoon, and 'ping-pong' all the evening, have not much time for the refinements of life!" This phrase Peter is inclined to think by no means exaggerated—not that anyone let us hope would be narrow-minded enough to object to girls and women playing all three, but in the country nowadays it is so difficult to find anyone who can talk or think of anything else! The Greeks were athletical, but they were also intellectual and æsthetic.

There are so many things to do nowadays—"so many thoughts to be." Surely "A Book of Things to be Done" would be rather an interesting possession. Not things perhaps in which we could personally take any part, but things which we might help the world not to forget in its general rush and scurry. Here are a few items from such a book which Peter saw the other day:—

1. The preservation and training of African elephants.
2. To secure physical instruction in schools.
3. The establishment of an emigration "portfolio" in the government.
4. A systematic collection of English folk songs and singing games.

How many people, one wonders, know of Watt's chronicle of "Deeds Done" in the "post men's garden" by St. Martin's le Grand. There on tablets fixed against the wall are recorded the lives and deaths of such men and women as "the stewardess of the Stella" and others who were not unworthy of the opportunities of Life and Death.

Query—will the new era bring us a new National hero? We want one badly. At present we have to seek for heroic traits in popular generals and disillusionized orators—and we are often "left seeking." We want more than "political spade work," we want deep ploughed furrows to "bring new material to the surface." It is curious to consider that, all unconsciously, we may be training the new hero of the new era—which is he to be—a cabbage grower in a nation of allotments, or the federator of an Empire?

## THE STUDENTS' DEBATING CLUB.

THIS new and delightful feature of ex-studentine life has only sprung into being during the autumn. The first "sitting" took place at 50, Porchester Terrace, by Mrs. Franklin's kind permission. The subject for debate was—

"Is Imagination on the Increase or on the Decrease?"

The first speaker held strongly that it was increasing, especially in inventions and discoveries, and in the power of comprehending other's positions and difficulties, as exemplified in the enormous increase of philanthropic work. In poesy and the arts, the abolition of the unities in dramatic work, and the attempt to collect and preserve ancient Celtic literature and folk-lore, were also cited as signs of an increase of imagination.

The relationship between realism and imagination was very fully considered, some speakers holding that realism was simply imagination acting upon details, and that the truest imagination might stand looking up above the world, but she had one foot on the solid earth of fact all the while.

One speaker tried to prove that modern public buildings like the Natural History Museum and the Imperial Institute, in their piteous attempts after something new in architectural style, were instances of the growth of imagination. Finally the meeting adopted the following resolution, not without protests from a small but resolute minority:—

"That this meeting holds that Imagination, while undoubtedly on the increase, is hampered by the influences of modern realism."

The second meeting, by kind invitation, took place in Croydon, at Mrs. Hall's, on January 18th. The subject for discussion was: "The Essential Qualities of a Great Man."

The proposer held that there were two types of great men—he who accomplished his appointed task by force of inspired genius, quite irrespective of and often without moral worth, and he who, by moral worth, raised the average of human life, quite irrespective of any question of personal



fame. The discussion was short, but very fairly general—some of the following were generally held to be essential qualities:—

1. Strong will.
2. Devotion to an idea.
3. Ambition.
4. To be a "Dreamer of Dreams."
5. To be silent under disadvantages.
6. To have the magnanimity to forgive his friends.

The meeting agreed that the test of greatness was not personal fame, but what a man's life effected for the betterment of his fellow creatures.

### SHELLEY'S "ALASTOR."

THIS poem, the first of Shelley's maturer writings, is, I think, one of his most characteristic works: it shows very clearly both the qualities and defects of his genius.

The reader, or still more, the hearer of this poem is, first of all, dazzled by the rapid succession of vividly portrayed scenes; he seems to share the poet's wonderfully keen mental vision, to be borne on the wings of his genius till, standing beside the seer on the lofty peak of Imagination, the reader also gazes through the crystal air, on long vistas opened up through a newly-revealed world of magic beauty.

Secondly, attention is drawn by the music of the poet's language and the force and brilliance of word-painting—whether in detailed landscape sketches, or in exquisitely delicate phrases—"Apples of gold in pictures of silver"—which are not merely descriptive, but actually powerful to call up images before the mind. I will quote a few of the lines that have thus appealed to me:—

- "Sunset and its gorgeous ministers."
- "Solemn midnight's tingling silentness."
- "When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness."

(Does not this recall the phrase of a modern writer—

- "The air was full of all the night-noises that taken together make one big silence"?)
- "Winter, robing with pure snow and crown  
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs."
- "Silence, too enamoured of that voice,  
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell,"
- "Solemn vision and bright *silver* dream."

(How forcibly that one word "silver," contrasted unconsciously with a possible "golden," characterises the poet's boyish dreams as spiritual—not sensuous!)

- "Among the ruined temples there,  
Stupendous columns and wild images  
Of more than men, where marble demons watch  
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men  
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around."
- "The cold white light of morning; the moon  
Low in the west; the clear and garish hills,  
The distinct valley."

—"A shadowy lure  
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms"—

(a phrase that always recalls to my mind the mysteriously fascinating Gioconda of the Louvre).

- "The waves arose. Higher and higher still  
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge  
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp."
- "Black gulfs and yawning caves  
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues  
To the loud stream."
- "The dark earth and the bending vault of stars."

Of longer passages, the descriptions of the Vision, of the poet's death, of the rivulet in which he sees an image of his life, and of nightfall ("Evening came on," etc.), are very fine; while, I should think, Shelley's magnificent painting of the forest at noon can never be surpassed—not a single phrase of it but might be quoted as a gem. Yet I once heard a lover of Nature and admirer of Wordsworth regret that the poet's "fancifulness" led him to describe oaks, beeches, and tropical parasites in the same locality!

The weak points of the poem, however, are not hard to find. We feel here, as in many others of Shelley's writings, a lack of sympathy with the joys and sorrows, hopes and fears of common human life. The theme is carried to a high and mystic plane, abstractions are dealt with throughout, and appeal is made almost exclusively to the imagination.